

# ESSEX PAST

The newsletter of the VCH Essex Trust

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The parish church of St Mary the Virgin, Frinton, 'in the olden days', c. mid 19th century. The romanticized engraving depicts the church before the restoration in 1868. According to local tradition, the figure in front is the churchwarden Richard Stone

*Reproduced by kind permission of John Barter and Linda Ellis*

## REPORT FROM THE COUNTY EDITOR

### *VCH Essex volume XII*

The drafts of VCH Essex volume XII were completed in the Spring of 2017 and sent for peer review and consideration by the VCH central office. They have been accepted for publication, but over the course of the work the texts had grown appreciably in size and complexity, especially that of St Osyth. The decision was therefore taken to publish the work in two parts. The first part, now amended after the peer reviewer's comments and returned to central office, will soon be in production. It will comprise a thematic introduction to the whole Tendring coastal area between St Osyth and the Naze followed by parish accounts of St Osyth, Great and Little Clacton (combined), Frinton, Great Holland and Little Holland. Part two, to be published later, will comprise an introduction to the Soken and their significant liberty, customs and ecclesiastical peculiar, before presenting the parish histories of Kirby-, Thorpe- and Walton-le-Soken.

A large number of individuals, trusts and societies have contributed in different ways to the volume, but none more so than the supporters of the VCH Essex Trust. I'm sure that everyone knows just how appreciative both the local VCH editors and the central VCH office is to them for their kind assistance. Special thanks must go to the main contributors who have researched and written substantial sections of text for the volume, including David Andrews, James Bettley, Adam Chapman, Janet Cooper, Carol Davidson-Cragoe, Shirley Durgan, Jenepher Hawkins, Sean O'Dell, Brenda Watkin and Elphin Watkin. And, of course, my VCH colleague and Assistant Editor Herbert Eiden, who has been a tremendous support throughout, as have the staff at the VCH central office and the trustees of the VCH Essex Trust.

### *VCH Essex volume XIII*

With volume XII now proceeding towards publication, the existing draft plan of the volume XIII on Harwich and Dovercourt will be further developed in conjunction with the central VCH office. At the moment we are proposing a single red book on the model of VCH Essex volume IX on Colchester. The first part would comprise a series of chronological chapters describing the development of Harwich and Dovercourt, and the second part a series of detailed thematic essays on historic buildings, services and institutions (for example the Harbour; Packet service; Naval dockyard, etc.). It is planned that the Assistant Editor will initially work on the Middle Ages and the County

Editor on the Tudor period. As described in my report last year, the winding down of work on volume XII has allowed some work to start already on Harwich and Herbert has undertaken initial searches in some HMSO calendars and other printed primary sources. Other chronological sections of the work will start as and when funding becomes available, hopefully involving other specialist assistants and contractors and also suitably qualified voluntary researchers and writers.

Plans are in development for fundraising towards the work on volume XIII, in collaboration with county-wide and local partners. In addition, a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund is under consideration, which could involve volunteers and the local community in an exciting project producing further public and educational outputs linked to VCH Essex's new programme of work.

**VCH 'Short' - Harwich and Dovercourt in the Nineteenth Century**

Dr Andrew Senter completed his research and, in the autumn of 2017, prepared a draft on the development of Harwich, Dovercourt (and

Come to our Annual General Meeting on  
**Saturday 28 April 2018 at 2.30pm**

At **INGATESTONE HALL**

*(by kind permission of Lord Petre)*

Following the formal business  
the Editor of the Victoria County History of Essex

**DR CHRIS THORNTON**

BA, PhD, FSA, FRHistS

will give an illustrated talk on

**'Exploring Coastal Communities:  
St Osyth to the Naze'**

(afternoon tea and our customary VCH raffle included)

Parkeston). The work has been funded by the VCH Essex Trust and the Essex Heritage Trust, with further help towards publication from the Institute of Historical Research. As well as editing and other support from the VCH Essex County Editor, the work was reviewed by five independent referees with knowledge of Harwich's history. We are very grateful for the referees' kind and thoughtful comments on the text, and also to Harwich Town Council, the Harwich Society and the Essex Record Office for kindly supplying images and granting permission for their use.

As reported in last year's newsletter, the research for the 'Short' and its format have been designed so that it can ultimately form the core of a chapter in the planned VCH Red Book on Harwich (Volume XIII). Within the confines of the format, Andrew has consulted a very wide range of sources and uncovered much new information. The complete text and images were submitted to the IHR on 19 January 2018 and, as I write, are being reviewed by a centrally appointed academic peer reviewer (a quality control process essential to the University's publishing programme). No publication or launch date can be announced until the book has been reviewed (and if necessary amended) and has entered the publication process at IHR.

### *VCH Essex Volunteer Groups*

The Clacton VCH Group has continued to be very active, being principally engaged this year with its 'Discovering Dad's Army in the Tendring District' project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund; The Essex Community Foundation; Essex Heritage Trust; Grassroots; and Essex Society for Archaeology & History. The work has been undertaken in conjunction with, and under the guidance of, military archaeologist Fred Nash. It is hoped that the project's findings will be displayed at an exhibition at Great Oakley and an information board will also be erected next to the 'pill box' in Great Oakley High Street. The whole project is due to be completed in August 2018. The Group also plan to publish a book summarising all the findings from their previous project on Gunfleet Estuary and Holland Haven. Now that the VCH's main attention is turning to Harwich we hope that the Group will be able to assist with our new projects there.

Our team of volunteer researchers in the Southend VCH group, led by Ken Crowe, has also been making steady progress towards a Southend 'Short'

comprising an overview of the history of the Borough from the post-Dissolution period to the present day. As reported in last year's newsletter, it will consist of a series of thematic chapters. Each will have a number of short 'background' papers providing a general history and context, together with one or more long essays with a more detailed examination or case study relating to that theme. The latter will cover aspects of the history of Southend not covered in previous publications. Good progress has been made during the year with some of the long essays now available in first draft, but there is still much work and checking to be done. When completed the study will be submitted to the central VCH office for peer review and after it is accepted for publication the Group plan to hold a book launch combined with a VCH/Local History symposium and exhibition in Southend.

CHRIS THORNTON  
*County Editor, VCH Essex*

## **The Trust's Finances and ...**

During 2017, the Trust met the costs of researching and writing more of Vol XII, and of the forthcoming 'short' of the Harwich area, paying out a total to Editors and Contributors of just over £54,000. Almost half of that sum came from the Trust's carefully managed funds allocated for the work, and nearly £7,000 came from special grants – one for the Built Environment section of Vol XII, and another for the Harwich 'short'. But a handsome £20,000 was donated by individuals, trusts and historical societies, and the Trustees remain immensely grateful to all our generous supporters who have given so much to ensure that the VCH work continues in Essex, as you can see from our Editor's enthusiastic report above. There is, however, one other way in which you may be able to help:

### **... our need for new Trustees**

Have you ever thought about becoming one of our trustees? Or do you know someone who would be willing to serve on our executive committee? Please think about the possibility seriously, and nominate a consenting enthusiast, using the form sent with your AGM papers.

## News from the Institute of Historical Research and VCH central office

The New Year brought an important change at the Institute of Historical Research (IHR) with the appointment of Professor Jo Fox as the new director of the Institute. Professor Fox is a specialist in the history of propaganda and psychological warfare in twentieth-century Europe and is currently working on a history of rumour in the Second World War and on a major project on rumour and politics in England from 1500 to the present day. Until joining the IHR, she was Professor of Modern History and Head of Department at Durham University.

Professor Fox's arrival is important for the VCH for several reasons, not least because until a new appointment is made at IHR later this year, the staff of VCH central office will report to her. This does not mean that the office has been in stasis, but Jo is helping us move forward in lots of different respects of the project which is good for both the Institute and for the VCH. Another recent change is that Jessica Davies-Porter has returned as VCH Publications Manager from her secondment with our friends in the School of Advanced Study (publications section) and has resumed looking after VCH book production.

This brings me on to another important development. The recent success of the 'Shorts' series is such that we have made the decision not to accept any new VCH 'Shorts' in addition to the 10 – including *Harwich and Dovercourt in the 19th Century* – we have in production or in prospect until 2019. The decision has been made in order to make each book as good as it deserves to be. This temporary break will also enable our small team to catch up with the large number of titles from across the country including red books for Essex, Somerset, the East Riding of Yorkshire – with others for Oxfordshire, Staffordshire and – most excitingly – the first Nottinghamshire volume for over a century following them.

DR ADAM CHAPMAN  
VCH Editing and Training Co-ordinator  
Institute of Historical Research

## CAPTAIN JAMES BUSHELL (1672-1738)

A few years ago a short article on “ ‘Captain’ James Bushell of Little Holland and Frinton” appeared in the *Essex Journal* (Spring 2013, pp. 29–30), in which the author, Roger Kennell, presented his initial findings about this colourful character. When James Bushell died in 1738, aged 66, diving on a wreck in the Middle Swin off Clacton he had led an eventful life as a mariner, privateer, smuggler, diver, inventor and sometime resident of Little Holland and Frinton. Most of this is well documented in Roger’s article, but a few more details have only recently come to light.

It was generally known that James Bushell married Joanna, the daughter of Thomas Warren, mariner and lord of the manor of Frinton, ‘at and unknown date’. According to a marriage licence “James Bushell of Purfleet, saylor” married “Joanna Warren of Frinton in the county of Essex, single” at the “church of Stifford, co. Essex” in 1700 (ERO, D/AEL 1700/13). This is corroborated by an entry in the marriage register of St Mary the Virgin and St Cedd in Stifford. The marriage took place ‘Primo die mensii Julii anno 12 William III’ (i.e. 1 July 1700 (ERO, D/P 330/1/1).

If his year of birth was 1672 then he was 28 at the time of marriage and he clearly had residency in Purfleet. Unfortunately, the parish registers of St Clement in West Thurrock (to which Purfleet belonged) do not contain baptisms pre 1685 (ERO, D/P 374/1/1), so it is not possible to find out if Bushell was actually born in Purfleet or only moved there later.

Ten years after his marriage Bushell appears in a central government document. In a ‘Declaration of Marque’, i.e. a licence by the High Court of Admiralty authorizing a person (a privateer) to attack and capture enemy vessels. The warrant is dated 23 February 1710 and gives the following details:

Commander: James Bushell

Ship: *Owner's Adventure*

Burden: 40 tons

Crew: 20

Owners: John Pattison of Mitcham, Surrey, and James Bushell

Lieutenant: John Pattison  
Gunner: James Start  
Boatswain: John Rumford  
Carpenter: Robert Bailey  
Cook: John Buck  
Armament: 6 guns (TNA, HCA 26/14/135).

It is very likely that he took the rank and name of 'Captain' from this time in Queen Anne's service. In the 1720s and 1730s James and his wife lived at Frinton Wick and Bennett's Farm in Little Holland, probably giving the latter its alternative name (Bushell's Farm). While he lived at the coast he must have got involved with handling contraband as the beach at Little Holland and Holland Gap was considered one of the hottest spots for smuggling from the 1720s.

About 1727 he left the country with the authorities on his trail apparently for trafficking 500 gallons of brandy, 3,300 pounds of tea and 2,050 gallons of brandy in separate runs in 1726-7. He spent the next years 'having taken up in fishing for wrecks' overseas (CUL, Ch (H), Political Papers, 41, 16). He returned destitute and surrendered himself, turning informer. By 1734 he was imprisoned for his smuggling activities, but successfully petitioned for his release on account of the services he alleged to have done for the Revenue (*Cal. of Treasury Books and Papers, 1729-1743*, vol. ii, pp. 602, 606).

In the summer of 1738, James Bushell drowned while diving on a wreck off the Clacton coast. His body was washed ashore in Burnham-on-Crouch, where he was buried 5 July 1738. In the parish burial register he was described as 'Capt. of ye *Sea-ranger* (presumably his ship) and ye only Engineer of England for [w]racks of Sunk Ships' (ERO, D/P 162/1/1; inf. R. Kennell and K. Bruce). Bushell might have been exhumed later and brought back to Frinton and reburied near the church porch as a later source alleged (ERO, D/DU 254/1), but it is equally possible that just a commemorative stone was erected

in Frinton. A death notice in the *London Magazine* stated that he 'was very expert in the Art of Diving, which he had follow'd near 40 Years' (vol. vii, 1738, p. 361). And indeed, he was known for having invented, or, at least, improved, a watertight leather diving suit which gave free play to arms and legs. However, diving in those early days was extremely dangerous and so the man who lived by the sea, eventually died by the sea.

*Abbreviations:*

CUL: Cambridge University Library

ERO: Essex Record Office

TNA: The National Archives

*Acknowledgement:* Thanks to Roger Kennell for generously sharing his research with me.

HERBERT EIDEN  
*Assistant Editor, VCH Essex*

## **IMMIGRANTS IN HARWICH IN THE 14th AND 15th CENTURIES**

The Arts and Humanities Research Council supported a research project called "England's Immigrants 1330-1550", a collaboration between the University of York, The National Archives and the Humanities Research Institute (University of Sheffield), which ran between 2012 and 2015. The questions asked included who were England's immigrants in the period 1330-1550? Where did they come from? Where did they live and work? How did they relate to other incomers and the native population? How long did they stay? How did they relate to the structures and institutions of English society? To what extent were immigrants integrated into the host society?

The project depended on several key sources. First, the returns from a series of specific taxes from 1440 levied upon first-generation immigrants

(known as the ‘alien subsidies’), which provide information regarding their names, places of residence, and sometimes origins, occupations and gender. From this source the project has calculated that the resident alien presence in England in 1440 was about 1% of the total population, and perhaps as high as 6% in London, figures comparable to the 1901 UK census. Evidence also suggests “a relatively wide geographical dispersion of the immigrant population, with individuals appearing not only in the major towns, ports and other economic centres, but in villages and smaller settlements across the country” (quote from project website).

Further sources include over 7,700 letters of protection and denization from the government, offering resident aliens the possibility of buying the right to remain and receive partial or total rights of naturalisation. In the early 16th century, Tudor lay subsidies also extended to tax resident aliens including Scots and Irish (though technically subjects of the English crown). These and further sources were used by the project to create a large new searchable database of resident aliens living in England between *c.*1330 and *c.*1550, which can be accessed at the following web address (from which the above details of the project have also been taken).

<https://www.englandsimmigrants.com/>

### *Immigrants in Harwich*

What can the database tell us about immigrants in Harwich during this period? Typing in the word “Harwich” to the database brings up 67 separate entries for the years 1394 (1 entry), 1413 (1), 1440 (24), 1441 (10), 1470 (1), 1484 (23) and 1524 (7). A few had the same name, so might refer to the same person, but the numbers suggest that there was a sizeable immigrant community in the 15th century. The major taxation sources for 1440 and 1484 show that some of the aliens were assessed as “householders” suggesting that they were fairly integrated into the community; perhaps there were fewer identifiable immigrants by the early 16<sup>th</sup> century? Only a few nationalities are recorded. John Frenchman (1440), Peter Ducheman (1470), John Ducheman (1484) have fairly obvious places of origin. The licences to remain granted to Adam Nevyll (1394) and Adam Nevyle (1413), probably (although not certainly)

the same man, show that he was an Irishman. Perhaps research into some of the more foreign sounding names such as Clay Tounbant (1440), Reynkyn Crebbe (1440), Janyn Petorismolte (1440), Hans Werward (1441) and Balthazar Wrytylman (1524), might help identify nationality. The overall impression is, unsurprisingly, one of Low Countries influence. However, most immigrants had names that were very English-sounding, probably as their European names had been anglicised.

All the recorded Harwich immigrants were male. The occupations found among them were as follows (the figures calculated are minimums to avoid double-counting as men with the same name can appear in two sources): Servant (14); Tailor (4); Shoemaker/Cordwainer (4); Hosier (3); Beerbrewer (3); Shipman (2); Glover, Barber, Cooper, Labourer (1 of each). The servants were mostly listed in the 1484 taxation, but without their names, as it was their masters who paid the tax. Some of the servants worked for other immigrants as listed in the returns. For example, the alien John Peers of Harwich, “keeper of a brewhouse” for which he paid 20s. tax, had three immigrant servants. Possibly he had brought over his own workforce, or recruited them from the local migrant community. I wonder if the three beerbrewers represent the Flemish brewing industry, with beer still being regarded “a part of everyday life in Belgium”. The number of immigrant tradesmen who were tailors or hosiers also parallels the importance of the textile industries in Flanders. The number of shipmen may seem small, but possibly the two recorded in 1440, William Love and Richard Borne, were unusual in having settled in the town as householders rather than visiting it as merchants and mariners.

The database therefore provides some interesting initial insights into Harwich’s immigrant community in the 15th and 16th centuries. The project website notes that it addressed a limited set of very specific sources likely to reveal a large dataset for the whole of England. Future research for the VCH on Harwich should be able to augment the database material, both by access to further local sources that could record the names of more alien residents and also to finding out more about the lives of the ones who have already been identified. The ‘Biographical Notes’ and ‘Relationships’ section of the database concerning Harwich immigrant residents are largely blank – setting us a challenge to discover more in the course of our work.

CHRIS THORNTON

## What is the VCH?

Begun in 1899, and named by her permission after Queen Victoria, the *Victoria History of the Counties of England* aimed to give to 'each Englishman a history of his native land'.

For each county a set of volumes was planned to cover everything from the landscape and natural history to the development of towns and villages through prehistory to the industrial age and beyond to the present day. 14 of these county sets are now complete and work continues in a further 13 counties – including Essex.

The VCH is without doubt the greatest publishing project in English local history, and has become an institution, renowned for its scholarly integrity. No other project has covered the history of England with such closeness or with such a wide-ranging eye, encompassing archaeological, ecclesiastical, architectural, political and other sources.

You can find out about publication and progress of the Essex project at [www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/counties/Essex](http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/counties/Essex). The VCH volumes are available in main libraries and an increasing number of them can be read online at [www.british-history.ac.uk](http://www.british-history.ac.uk). You can also order them from the publishers, Boydell & Brewer Ltd ([www.boydell.co.uk](http://www.boydell.co.uk)) or telephone: 01394 610600.

### HOW TO GIVE

If you would like to support the *Victoria County History of Essex*, we would be happy to send you a leaflet about the great work, together with a form for both donation and gift aid.

Or you can simply send us a cheque, made payable to VCH Essex, with a gift aid declaration if appropriate.

The address for donations is that of the Hon Secretary:  
Mrs Patricia Herrmann, West Bowers Hall, Woodham Walter,  
Maldon, Essex CM9 6RZ. Mrs Herrmann's email address  
is: [patriciaherrmann@talk21.com](mailto:patriciaherrmann@talk21.com)

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